

News from SALEM COUNTY

Office of Public Information

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SALEM COUNTY TOURISM CAMPAIGN OFF TO A GREAT START

SALEM COUNTY, NJ: The Salem County Freeholder Board is pleased to report on the first phase of their multi-media *Discover The Possibilities* advertising campaign. In fact, response to the program from the public has been overwhelmingly positive, and initial returns have been very promising.

"Salem County has so much to offer to our residents and visitors," said Deputy Freeholder Director Beth Timberman, Chair of the Planning and Transportation Committee. "We are blessed with miles of beautiful waterways, pristine parks, a thriving cultural arts scene, and an interesting historical legacy. There are many opportunities for simple day trips and weekend getaways, and we are committed to bringing this message to a wider audience. This is more important than ever with hard-working families throughout the region tightening their belts and planning vacations closer to home."

"In order to make sure we are spending advertising dollars wisely, the Department of Tourism and our marketing professionals have established a number of criteria in order to help determine a return on investment," Timberman said. "These criteria include, but are not limited to, media impressions, Website traffic patterns, survey information, and the estimated value of free media through public relations efforts. The advertising component of the *Discover The Possibilities* campaign was only launched in May, and although the overall marketing plan is still in its early stages, we have begun to develop positive data."

- Using a broad-based selection of interrelated media platforms and other marketing tools, the *Discover The Possibilities* advertising campaign delivered over 8.6 million impressions at a cost (CPM) of only \$7.76 per thousand impressions. CPM is a good indicator to measure against radio, internet, print, and television advertising mediums because it allows you to integrate data and evaluate the cost effectiveness of the overall campaign.
- The official Salem County Tourism Website www.VisitSalemCountyNJ.com was launched on May 1, 2009. While the data is still being analyzed, we are able to present some preliminary findings. In only three months, the Tourism Website

had 41,051 visitors and 161,077 page views. The traffic was split almost evenly between "Unique" visitors and "Repeat" visitors. This indicates that individuals are using the Website as a resource for information. The Website has received visitors from 38 states, with the primary interest coming from our advertising target market areas of New Jersey, Eastern Pennsylvania, Delaware, Maryland, and Southern New York. Most significantly, during periods of television and radio advertising Website traffic and page views increased by 45%.

- The County and its marketing consultants have been gathering survey information regarding audience demographics, attendance, and business traffic patterns. The first county-sponsored event measured as part of this effort was the "Arts in Bloom" event held May 30 and 31. With the cooperation of many of the venues, we were able to collect some very interesting and encouraging data. For example, 66% of survey respondents visited between six and 12 sites. An amazing 80% of respondents said the event exceeded their expectations, and another 19% said it met their expectations. Forty-three percent of respondents did some shopping and dined out during the weekend, and more importantly over 40% of respondents were from outside the county. Several businesses participated in the event by offering special discounts or premiums to tour goers and most reported increased business activity as a result. The next survey will be conducted during the fall "Artists at Work" event.
- Salem County is actively cultivating media sources, editors, and writers to generate positive editorial coverage. Needless to say, positive publicity is worth thousands of advertising dollars in print, broadcast, and internet mediums. Over the last three months, public relations efforts have generated 225 column inches and 3 minutes of positive television news coverage with an estimated value of \$10,187. Using the conservative industry standard of five times the advertising rate, the estimated public relations value for the three-month period is \$50,935.

"Along with the facts and figures, there is anecdotal evidence from many of our venues that traffic at events such as the Bluegrass Festival and the Salem County Fair were better than ever this year," Timberman continued. "We are also receiving numerous requests for information through the Website, our toll-free telephone number, and at the visitor's center."

According to Timberman, the Department of Tourism is working with the Tourism Council and the Chamber of Commerce to develop innovative partnerships which can help leverage our marketing dollars, create efficiencies, and deliver a broader impact to the overall goals and efforts of the *Discover The Possibilities* campaign. "For example, on October 15 we are sponsoring a free 'Tourism 101' seminar for local businesses featuring Sharon Rossi from the Philadelphia Tourism Marketing Corporation. Also, on October 3, we are working with local groups to sponsor our first Community Pride Day which will include the clean-up of Fenwick Grove Park on Cheney Road in Mannington. Finally, we are developing cost-effective cooperative advertising ideas which would allow county municipalities and businesses to become part of the campaign."

"Clearly, those involved in Salem County's tourist sector face many challenges to capture and increase visitor numbers in an extremely competitive market place. However, I am confident that the *Discover The Possibilities* campaign is positioning the county as a competitive and appealing destination, and that our residents and businesses are getting their money's worth for the comparatively limited marketing dollars we are spending," Timberman concluded.

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